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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E
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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS, HIGHLIGHTS
PARTNERSHIP

11. SUMMARY: The Ambassador presented his credentials to President Guelleh on November 10. In their formal remarks and informal post-ceremony conversation, both President Guelleh and the Ambassador evoked the strong U.S.-Djibouti partnership, especially noting USAID's successful programs in health and education, and Djibouti's hosting of the Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). The Ambassador and President Guelleh also underscored common U.S. and Djibouti interests in combating piracy, advancing the Somalia peace process, and pressing for a peaceful solution to the Djibouti-Eritrea border standoff. END SUMMARY.

12. The brief presentation ceremony featured short formal remarks followed by a relaxed conversation. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahamoud Ali Youssouf attended, and there was full local press coverage. In his remarks, the Ambassador saluted Djibouti's positive contributions to regional peace and stability, and highlighted both the USG's recent additional food aid contributions in response to Djibouti's growing food insecurity, and USAID's ongoing successful programs in health, education, and democracy and good governance. The Ambassador also thanked Djibouti for hosting CJTF-HOA, and reemphasized the U.S. commitment to finding a peaceful solution for the Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute.

13. President Guelleh responded in formal remarks welcoming the Ambassador to Djibouti, and thanking the U.S. for its active cooperation in Djibouti's fight against poverty. He especially noted USAID's work in improving rural health clinics. On the border dispute, Guelleh contrasted Djibouti's commitment to regional peace and stability with Eritrea's "destabilizing" role in the region.

14. During a friendly, informal post-ceremony conversation, Guelleh congratulated the Ambassador on the recent U.S. presidential elections. Guelleh said that while he was disappointed that he himself had been out of the country at the time, he was glad that President-Elect Barack Obama had visited Djibouti briefly in 2007 and had met with Prime Minister Deleita Mohamed Deleita. On Somalia, Guelleh mentioned his participation in the recent IGAD summit in Nairobi, and especially urged the importance of funding for the proposed 10,000-strong Somali force to allow for AMISOM and Ethiopian withdrawal. While expressing concern with the continued rash of piracy off the coast of Somalia, Guelleh seemed reasonably pleased with the European Union's recent anti-piracy efforts. The Ambassador noted continued U.S. support for a UN PKO for Somalia to improve security and stability in the country.

15. On the Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute, Guelleh reiterated Djibouti's commitment to finding a peaceful solution. As he noted growing "pressure" both from the Djiboutian population and from the strain of keeping Djiboutian troops near the border, Guelleh mildly criticized the U.N. Security Council for "escaping decisions" and noted some countries' unwillingness to impose sanctions, despite Eritrea's continued "defiance" of the international community. The Ambassador concurred that Eritrea remains a spoiler in the region and noted USG leadership in the Council to press for a more robust

response. On the economic front, Guelleh said he hoped that CJTF-HOA's presence at Camp Lemonier and the upcoming construction of the new U.S. Embassy complex would continue to offer opportunities to Djiboutian businesses.

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